Touring Military Child Development Programs

How to Conduct Tours of Military Family Child Care Homes and Child Development Centers

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DoD Training Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Military Child Care Act

Crystal City, VA

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Touring Military Child Development Programs

Have You Ever Gone on a "See Europe in 'X' Days" Tour?

- Before you went, the tour company sent you an attractive, glossy marketing brochure explaining why they are the best
  - *What kind of professional marketing materials do you have that explain your program?*
- You had many tours to chose from … 10 -21 days, London/Paris/Rome or all of Europe
  - *If you have 15 minutes, what do you "show off"? How about an hour?*
- The company knew who their target audience was - "Family Friendly", "Senior Citizens", "Peddle your way across the Alps"
  - *Who's coming? The Commander? FRG Leaders? Potential Community Partners? Unannounced Inspection Team? Grand Opening?*

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Have You Ever Gone on a "See Europe in 'X' Days" Tour?

- When you got to the Louvre, they turned you over to the local guide – Pierre the Parisian art historian knows more about the Louvre than your tour guide, Macbeth from Glasgow
  - *Who does the talking? If you have a great Program Lead or Family Child Care Provider, they may be best able to explain what is happening*
- When the Autobahn was closed, they had "Plan B" – Got to Heidelberg 3 hours late? Skip the tour of the Bahnhof and go directly to the Schloss
  - *What happens it the Commander is running late? The CDC kitchen is flooding? The FCC Provider reports an outbreak of something contagious?*
- They helped you cross the border into an unfamiliar country – they collected your passport and talked to the guards on your behalf
  - *To the "uninitiated" the gates of a military base can seem somewhat intimidating. Your job is to ease the stress*

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What do You Talk About – the "Overarching" Key messages

- **HINT:** You must learn to judge what a visitor wants to see and balance that with what you really want them to know (it's for their own good… really)
- **Our Mission -** it's all about **mission readiness –** we provide services to allow parents (both Military and DoD Civilian) **to go to work**
  - *We help parents balance their parental responsibilities and their mission requirements.*
  - *And while we are doing that, we do it to the best of our ability by providing*

QUALITY, AVAILABLE, AFFORDABLE and ACCOUNTABLE

Programs and Services

Demonstrates the Military's Commitment to Service Members and their Families

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What do You Talk About – the "Overarching" Key messages

- **The Systemic Approach** through multiple child care options i.e., Family Child Care, Child Development Centers, Community-Based Programs, and other Outreach Initiatives

- **Comprehensive Standards** results in consistent and predictable program practices virtually around the world

- **Inspections and Oversight** ensure enforcement of the standards

- **Sustained funding** provides "Common Levels of Support" equally distributed to each program

- **A trained, competent and adequately compensated workforce** results in lower staff turnover, job satisfaction, and positive outcomes for children

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The Family Child Care Program – How to pick Providers

- ***WANTED: PROVIDERS WHO***
- Are experienced, nationally accredited, have a CDA or higher degree
- Can articulate their program's philosophy and can demonstrate how their philosophy is incorporated into their program
- Take pride in being a Military FCC Provider. Can articulate the benefits the military provides to them
- As seen by their peers as leaders
- May provide hard to find child care services
- Have successfully integrated their family life and child care business

You would put your own child there

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The Family Child Care Program – Core Messages

- FCC program is part of a comprehensive, systemic program which also include Child Development Centers, Community-based programs, and other outreach services
- Is the major supplier of evening and weekend care
- Allows parents to place all their children in a multi-age environment in their neighborhood
- Gives parents a choice of child care options and is the preferred choice for many families
- FCC Providers complete the same training as their CDC counterparts
- Provides a small business opportunity for military family members, increasing economic self-sufficiency of the family
- Helps keep child care affordable to the Military (saves construction and operating costs of a CDC)
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The Family Child Care Program – The Tour

- HINT: If you are staff, VISIT THE DAY BEFORE; if you are a provider, CHECK THESE THINGS THE DAY BEFORE:

- As you walk to the door:
  - Lawn tidy? Poster in place? Doorbell working?

- Upon entering the home, check to see if the following are in place:

  - Sign in /out sheets
  - Record of Fire Drills
  - Activity Schedule
  - USDA Menu
  - DoD Child Abuse Poster
  - Required Certificates

Are you able to articulate the importance of the above items?

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The Family Child Care Program – The Tour

- The Program
  - Explain there is a balance between “home” and “business.” Find examples – a “Van Gogh” hanging next to Cindy’s fingerpainting; a dining room table turned into a fort – there should be clear evidence of intentionality
  - Demonstrate how the activity schedule supports children’s learning – at the time of the visit, children should be meaningfully engaged. Does the provider create portfolios for each child? Show one.

- Health/Nutrition/Safety
  - Discuss safety procedures – observe covered electrical outlets, cleaning supplies safely stored, fire extinguisher
  - When possible and appropriate, observe hand washing, diaper changing, and food preparation
  - NOTE: Where’s Fido?

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The Family Child Care Program – The Tour

What the Staff Member Might Say	What the Provider Might Say
Military FCC Providers run their own business. We train, certify and monitor them to ensure children are cared for in safe, nurturing environments	The FCC Staff is always so helpful! They gave me suggestions on how to improve my program. Many of the toys here came from the lending library. The training they give me even helped me to be a better parent! The frequent inspections can sometimes be a pain, but I know they are to keep the children safe and I always learn from them
Providers support the mission by caring for children in the evenings and weekends	For the next month, Charlie's mom has to work late because her unit is getting ready to be deployed. I told her not to worry! Charlie is like a member of my family and he can stay here until she gets off work.
Providers have an opportunity to enroll in the USDA Food Program	Not only do I get reimbursed for the meals and snacks I feed the children, but with the training I received on nutrition, my own family is eating healthier!
FCC is the preferred child care option for many families	Many people think FCC is only a place for children until a space comes open in the CDC. But that's not true! Kelly's mom picked me because she wanted a small group environment. And LaTonya was on the waiting list for the CDC, but when they offered her a spot, her dad turned it down to stay with me!
YOUR MESSAGE HERE:	

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Did You Know there was a DoD Resource to help you plan your Grand Opening?

- ***Opening our Doors to Children and Youth …… Lessons Learned from the ARMY experience***

  - READ the book many, many months before the grand opening
  - Keep higher headquarters informed of any delays
  - Make sure there's ample time between when the move into the new facility and the "Grand Opening"
  - Send invitations EARLY
  - Invitees include community, installation, and HIGHER HEADQUARTERS
  - Take Lots of Pictures/video of the event
  - Forward your "Lessons Learned"

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The CDC– How to pick Classrooms

- ***HINT: Nothing says you have to tour the WHOLE facility!***

Your selections should include rooms with

- the best staff/child interactions
- a high percentage of CDAs and degrees
- the best overall environment
- staff who can articulate and demonstrate the program's philosophy
- staff who take pride in working for Military Child Care. Can articulate the benefits the military provides to them
- "specialized" care such as infants or children with special needs

You would put your own child there

-

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The Child Development Center – Core Messages

- CDC program is part of a comprehensive, systemic program which also include Family Child Care, Community-based programs, and other outreach services
- Offers part-time, full time, and hourly care services
- Supports the mission by offering early morning (Physical Training) or extended duty day hours
- Generally employs the largest number of military family members of any “entity” on the installation
- Charges parent fees using a sliding fee scale based on a parent’s ability to pay
- Child Care costs are a shared expense between the military and the Service Member

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CDC– The Tour

- HINT: CHECK THESE THINGS THE DAY BEFORE

- As you walk to the door:
  - Any trash in the flower pots? Building in good repair? Any staff smoking on 50 feet from the building in plain view? Does the building say “CDC” on it anywhere? If you can see the playground, what are staff doing?

- Upon entering the building check to see if the following are in place:

  - Name tags prepared for visitors
  - FRIENDLY Parent Bulletin Board
  - Accreditation Certificate
  - DoD Child Abuse Poster
  - CURRENT DOD Certificate
  - USDA Menu

Are you able to articulate the importance of the above items?

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CDC – The Tour

- Infants
  - Environment/Program:
    - Explain the “Primary Caregiver” concept
    - Show written communication between program assistant/parent such as feeding/diapering/what the child did that day
    - You might discuss how you keep deployed parents up-to-date on their children’s progress
    - Display individualized activity schedule for each infant
    - Point out features of the room:
      - Limited number of high chairs; individual cribs (describe SIDS policy); protected space for crawling; space for parents to leave personal belongings
  - Health/Nutrition/Safety
    - Observe and discuss hand washing/diaper changing/food prep –
      - Only a few (and the same) children are changed on each station; feeding and diapering areas are separate; infants held for feeding or encouraged to self feed
    - Note fire evacuation cribs at each door and explain evacuation procedures
    - Point out Vision Panels/Video Surveillance/Mirrors help safeguard children
    - Toys/Materials age appropriate and safe, clean

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CDC – The Tour

- Toddlers
  - Environment/Program:
    - How has the environment changed? – toys, materials, equipment
    - You might discuss how you keep deployed parents up-to-date on their children's progress
    - Highlight activity schedule – how are children developing self-help and self-discipline skills? What are they LEARNING?
    - Look at the playground – describe the types of toddler specific equipment
  - Health/Nutrition/Safety
    - Observe and discuss hand washing/diaper changing/toilet/food prep –
      - Only a few (and the same) children are changed on each station; feeding and diapering areas are separate; toilet training is supported;
    - Describe method used to inform parents of accidents and injuries
    - Point out Vision Panels/Video Surveillance/Mirrors help safeguard children
    - Toys/Materials age appropriate and safe, clean
    - Show where protected outlets are placed; cleaning supplies stored

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CDC – The Tour

- Preschoolers
  - Environment/Program:
    - How has the environment changed? – toys, materials, equipment, classroom
    - You might discuss how you keep deployed parents up-to-date on their children's progress
    - Highlight activity schedule and the observation system
    - How are you preparing children for school
    - Look at the playground – describe the types of preschool specific equipment and extended learning opportunities outdoors
  - Health/Nutrition/Safety
    - Describe your procedures for administering medications and preventing the spread of disease
    - Describe method used to inform parents of accidents and injuries
    - Point out Vision Panels/Video Surveillance/Mirrors help safeguard children
    - Toys/Materials age appropriate and safe, clean
    - Show where protected outlets are placed; cleaning supplies stored
    - Describe how staff ensure children's safety (water leaned up after water play, broekn toys immediately removed, etc)

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CDC – The Tour

- Other Areas
  - The Kitchen
    - View from hallway – too many cooks spoil the PM snack
    - Know what the menu is BEFORE you are surprised during the tour!
    - Know some number of how many meals and snacks are served in a year
    - Describe the benefits of the USDA CACFP
  - The Staff Lounge
    - Make sure it's tidy
    - Turn off the TV
    - Make sure the lounge only has a couple of staff in it
  - The Hallway
    - Make sure it looks child –friendly (like art work and bulletin boards) and not "the longest mile"
    - Stop and look at what is on a bulletin board – like names of staff and their training progress
    - Check to make sure that emergency exits have not been blocked by storage of equipment
    - Look to see if vision panels are covered in children's artwork

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CDC – The Tour

What the CDC Director Might Say	What the Program Lead Might Say
We exist to allow parents to go to work. We support them in balancing their parental responsibilities and mission requirements. It's a mission readiness and quality of life issue.	I'm definitely a morning person. I like coming in at 5:30 to take care of children while their parents are at physical training. I mean, at that hour, where could they go off-base? Most civilian programs don't open that early.
Standards are enforced through frequent inspections and oversight provided by installation higher headquarters personnel.	I used to hate those inspections. I thought all they wanted to do was catch me doing something wrong. But now I realize how many improvements have been made around here as a direct result of those inspections!
The quality of this CDC is benchmarked against nationally recognized standards for both CDC accreditation and staff credentialing programs	People are always accusing us of being "gold plated." But if the civilian world has access to the same nationally recognized standards as we do, aren't we the same as any other quality program?
We provide training to help the staff become competent. It is a benefit offered free to all employees. Successful completion of training is a job requirement.	Timmy's dad has been deployed for 6 months. Timmy been acting out lately. Before, I wouldn't have known what to do, but the training helped me learn how I can help Timmy – and his mother. Before, I would have thought he was one of those "Problem Children." But now I can see he just really misses his dad.
YOUR MESSAGE HERE:	